

Tobacco company coupons raise odds ex-smokers will light up again

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Coupons for tobacco products appear to have a big impact on relapse

rates for smokers who have recently kicked the habit, researchers report.

A study of more than 5,000 former smokers who participated in a [national survey](#) found double the relapse rate for those who received cigarette coupons by direct mail or email.

"We hypothesized that people who received coupons would be more likely to relapse, but we were surprised by the magnitude of the effect," said lead author Jidong Huang, a professor in the Department of Health Policy and Behavioral Sciences at Georgia State University School of Public Health.

"It really shows that smokers who have quit the past year are the most vulnerable to relapse, and it implies that policies that prohibit the distribution of tobacco coupons could help more people succeed in quitting," he said in a university news release.

Smoking continues to be the leading cause of preventable death for Americans. It claims more than 480,000 lives each year in the United States, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Huang said strong tobacco prevention and control policies, including raising tobacco taxes, adopting comprehensive smoke free policies, conducting hard-hitting anti-tobacco media campaigns and implementing restrictions on [tobacco advertising](#), have reduced cigarette smoking to all-time lows.

Yet more regulation is needed. Physicians and smoking cessation counselors should warn people who have recently quit about the impact that marketing materials can have on their efforts to quit, Huang said.

"Most people aren't aware that direct mail and email marketing are

among the most important ways for [tobacco companies](#) to reach current and potential smokers, but it's still a very important public health issue," he said. "In addition to interventions and treatments that help people manage nicotine cravings, policies that prohibit the distribution of tobacco coupons could help more people successfully quit."

Study findings were published in the September issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

More information: Yu Wang et al, Cigarette Coupon Receipt and Smoking Relapse by Duration of Smoking Abstinence, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.amepre.2023.02.011](#)

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